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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 001352

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [CASC](#) [AG](#)  
SUBJECT: EVOLVING AQIM TERROR HAS ALGERIANS CONCERNED

REF: A. A. ALGIERS 1329  
[1](#)B. B. ALGIERS 1350

ALGIERS 00001352 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: CDA, a.i. Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Meetings with GOA contacts following a recent bombing uptick in the Kabylie region reveal a government concerned and sober about its ability to keep up with an adaptive and increasingly sophisticated enemy. By reaching out for more technology and information, the GOA has demonstrated an awareness that its own militaristic approach to fighting terror has not evolved as quickly as have enemy terror tactics over the past year. The GOA continues to capture terrorists in frequent operations that are embellished and splashed across the front pages, while privately acknowledging that more terrorists are being made, and not all are homegrown. Meanwhile, attacks over the past year have become increasingly cosmopolitan, featuring a developing use of IEDs, different suicide car bomb techniques and, for the first time, a suicide vest. The variation in tactics inspired by Al Qaeda attacks in Iraq and elsewhere has kept the GOA on its toes, uncertain of what comes next. END SUMMARY.

THE ENEMY EVOLVES...

[1](#)2. (C) Since the multiple car bomb attacks in eastern Algiers in late October 2006, Algeria's diet of terrorism has featured IEDs of changing size, target and sophistication. A roadside bomb attack on an American company shuttle bus in western Algiers on December 10, 2006, killed two, including one foreigner. February 2007 brought the use of multiple, simultaneous, large VBIED attacks on government sites in the Kabylie. March saw a repeat of the December 10 scenario, this time against a bus carrying Russian and Ukrainian workers near Ain Defla. The multiple attacks in Algiers on April 11 represented the first suicide car bomb (SVBIED) attacks in the Algerian theater, and came less than three months after the former Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) formally changed its name to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Regardless of how formal AQIM's links to the central Al Qaeda command might be, it seems clear that the arrival of Al Qaeda-style suicide attacks in Algeria represented a change in tactics inspired by Al Qaeda's operations in Iraq and elsewhere.

13. (C) Through the summer of 2007, IED usage increased in sophistication, making more frequent use of remote control and cell phone detonators. In the same period, SVBIED use also increased. As evidenced by the July 11 SVBIED attack on a military base in Lakhdaria and the very similar September 8 SVBIED attack on a coast guard base in Dellys, suicide attacks once considered the exception now appear to be becoming the norm. For the first time on September 6, a bomber wearing a suicide vest was responsible for an assassination attempt in Batna against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (he missed Bouteflika but killed 22 other people). A further innovation -- or importation -- of tactics was revealed on September 21, when a SVBIED in motion changed direction on the highway to attack a military-escorted convoy of the French construction company Razel. (Note: the French convoy had followed the same route at regular and recurring times. End note.)

...WHILE THE GOA SCRATCHES ITS HEAD  
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14. (C) Publicly, the GOA still presents an aggressive and confident approach to fighting terror, and press elements with ties to the security services continue to feature almost daily reports of triumphant military activities against pockets of insurgents in the mountains to reassure a troubled public. The Embassy received the same consistent message from several different GOA ministers during recent meetings -- that the war on terror "has been won" in Algeria and the real challenge now lies in reforming the economy and finding employment and opportunity for Algeria's youth.

15. (C) Over the last few days, however, Embassy meetings with key Algerian military contacts have revealed growing government concern about how to handle suicide bombers and

ALGIERS 00001352 002.2 OF 002

the increased variety and sophistication of enemy attacks. Convinced that U.S. technology and information, rather than a change in approach, would offer a silver bullet to fight suicide bombers, some GOA officials have revealed their frustration and relative desperation in the face of this new threat, even suggesting that the U.S. might be to blame for not providing Algeria with the tools it needs to defeat the threat.

THE RAMADAN FACTOR: SHORTCUT TO PARADISE?  
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16. (C) Islamic extremists in Algeria consider the holy month of Ramadan to be a month of Jihad. Extremist websites espouse the view that suicide attacks conducted during this month guarantee the bombers a place in paradise. According to the websites, although Muslims are banned from fighting other Muslims during Ramadan, they may engage in attacks against non-Muslims. Two upcoming dates are of note: Laylat al-Qadr, the night of October 8-9, during which the gates of paradise are supposedly open to those who wage war in defense of Islam; and September 29, the anniversary of the Battle of Badr fought by the Prophet Muhammad against non-Muslim Persians. AQIM appears to have adopted some of these views, as the AQIM web video of the April 11 attack is entitled "the Battle of Badr."

COMMENT: WHAT GOES AROUND...  
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17. (C) The GOA has realized it is facing an evolving threat. Behind its facade of victorious public rhetoric, GOA sources privately concede that AQIM has become agile and flexible over the past year, hiding in the mountains and adapting its technology and tactics faster than Algerian security services can keep pace. (Ref B reports on new attacks directed against foreigners during the past week.) The evolution of AQIM's tactics is due at least in

part to imported techniques, inspiration and training from Al Qaeda in Iraq and elsewhere. That being the case, we expect the tactical evolution we have seen since October 2006 to continue. The ability of the Algerian government to adapt the tactics it forged in the Islamist insurgency of the 1990s in order to defeat an innovative and suicidal enemy remains unclear.

DAUGHTON